



ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY

AUG 23 2002

MONTANA OFFICE



State of Montana
Dept. of Labor & Industry
Workforce Services Division

August 22, 2002

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Wendy Thomi, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
10 W. 15th Street, Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626

Wendy,

I was interested in the latest "ASK EPA" in the Tobacco Valley News, August 22, 2002 edition. You indicated that 50% of the workers hired to do cleanup this year are from the Libby area. You also indicated that 60-70% of the workers at the clean up projects over the last 2 years are local hires. Since we continue to receive very few openings for work on the cleanup, I would certainly be interested in knowing the actual numbers as opposed to percentages. If you have that information I would appreciate your sharing that with us. Currently we have over 300 people still registered/on-file for work with the cleanup. They also have their certifications, and in most cases resumes on file as well. As I stated in my last letter to you on May 15, 2002, that since the announcement of the cleaning of the residences in Libby, and the subsequent news articles, the level of unanswered questions regarding employment has escalated. I wouldn't have believed it possible but it has, especially since the TV coverage out of Kalispell in the last couple of weeks. The level of frustration regarding the lack of employment possibilities continues to rise as well. This level of frustration is only becoming more focused as more and more out of area workers show up on the jobs here in Libby.

As our agency is at the heart of this situation I would like to once again take the opportunity to make some suggestions to hopefully reduce frustrations. The first thing would be to have any successful contractors, or potential contractors or sub-contractors "go public" with as much information as possible regarding their anticipated needs and particularly their hiring processes. I would suggest this be done with any new or returning contractors or sub-contractors. This certainly would not be in violation of the Federal Acquisition Act. It seems to me to be a way to educate the job seeking public as to how a particular contractor wishes to handle the hiring. They could also use this opportunity to publicly state they are doing no hiring if that was indeed the case. With returning contractors, the general public makes no distinction when it comes to hiring being done at this time on the project; it is a new hire to them. I also wonder how much of the percentages you stated includes rehire from last year. Rehire does nothing for the approximately 300 people were trained this last spring in anticipation of 100s of jobs, many at their own expense. I would also urge that any contractors or agencies doing non-remediation, but project related hiring, such as surveying, or office work, also make that information available to the public, as again, the local workforce is seeking any type of

work available as a result of this project. If they are going to utilize our services, I need to be aware of that prior to any public announcement.

Since the public views Job Service as a central clearinghouse of information, our agency needs to be aware of the same criteria. We need to know who is hiring, and more importantly how they are recruiting, if they are recruiting. This information is required, as we have a responsibility to the job seeking labor force to keep them informed of any changes in how they are to be considered for employment.

As I have stated many times, our responsibility from an employer standpoint is to offer our services and to inform the employer of their Federal Contractor Job Listing (FCJL) requirements as a result of their receipt of federal funds. This is not attempt "to corner" the hiring market and "force" employers to hire someone that is not qualified. From a job seeker standpoint, we are concerned only with getting qualified referrals to the employer; whether as a result of a job order placed with us, or as a result of information gathered from an employer regarding their particular recruitment methods. If contractors or subcontractors elect not to use our services we still need to be aware of how they are recruiting so that we can send applicants through their process. If we do not have that information we have no choice but to direct our job seekers to the contractor with whatever information we may have, such as address, phone number or job site. We would really like to be of service to the contractors and/or subcontractors, but we also must always encourage our job seekers to make an "active" job search, especially if we are not provided information.

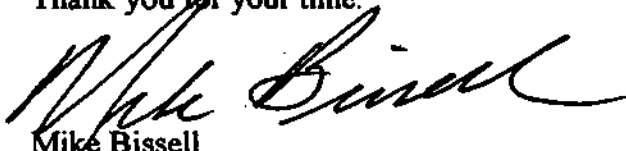
We are still insuring that our applicant pool is aware of the process we have in place. That is, to be registered with our office, so that they are available should any contractors be utilizing our services. Job Service has a responsibility to those job seekers who have received training and have registered in good faith with our office, to notify them if any changes or deviations from this process have occurred or will be occurring. It is important that we be informed of any contractors or subcontractors who are operating on this project, who are not listing, or making us aware of their job openings. We can then meet our responsibility by notifying those people registered with us as to how they can apply and be considered on an equal basis.

To date our offices has received the following orders: Marcor, 2 openings for Heavy Equipment Operators and 2 openings for Paver Asphalt; Western States, 4 openings for Laborer (required state license); Environmental Restoration, 2 openings for Laborer, and 2 openings for Heavy Equipment operator; KUO, no openings, and CDM no openings. With a grand total of 12 openings being listed with us, you can easily see why we, as the only federally mandated Wagner-Peyser labor exchange provider in Lincoln County, feel we are still out of the communication loop when it comes to potential employment as it relates to this project. This after extensive efforts at all levels to be involved as per our federal mandate. These include recent failed attempts to contact KUO after becoming aware of significant hiring at the mine site. The only contractor or sub-contractor to fully utilize our services has been Environmental Restoration Inc.

I expressed to you in an e-mail back on April 12, 2002, that we felt there still exists a serious lack of coordination when it comes to potential applicants getting information on how to be considered for jobs with the investigation and clean-up. We feel this hasn't changed much in 4 months. Once again, please let me know ASAP if there is anything we can do to improve this situation, and improve coordination.

Please feel free to forward these suggestions, and comments to any contractor, potential contractor, agency or person involved in the process. I would appreciate any comments or responses or suggestions you might have.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Bissell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bissell".

Mike Bissell

Manager, Kootenai/Sanders County Job Service Workforce Center
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Libby, MT 59923
(406) 293-6282 ext.222

cc: Mark Bowlds, Bureau Chief, Field Operations, DOLI
Polly LaTray, Director, Veteran's Employment and Training



ASK EPA !!

Questions and Answers

about Asbestos and EPA's Investigation

Q : Are local workers and companies being used and/or hired for the cleanup work in Libby?

A : Yes. Although the Federal Acquisition Regulations prohibit the EPA from directly proscribing who its contractors hires, over 50% of the workers hired to work on the clean ups this year are from the Libby area. This percentage is likely to increase as more clean up projects get underway. Over the last two years roughly 60-70% of the workers at the clean up sites have been local hires, and this will probably be the case this year and in the future as well.

In addition to the workers conducting the actual clean ups, there are other contracting and sub-contracting opportunities as well. These cover a wide range of activities, such as providing fill or topsoil, or the restoration of the Libby High School Track. Again, the Federal Acquisition Regulations Prohibit the EPA from directing that contracts only be awarded in the local area, nonetheless, local contractors have competed well for such work. As a few examples, at this time local contractors are conducting the restoration of the High School and Middle School Track, providing fill material and rip-rap for the Screening Plant, and doing the clearing and grubbing work for the asbestos landfill cell being built at the Lincoln County Landfill.

For more information call:

Wendy Thomi at 406-457-5037

Toll Free in Montana 1-866-457-2690 x5037

August 19, 2002

Contractors	Marcor	KUO Env. Services and subs		
		KES	CKY	Marcor
Local Employees	8	7	1	0
MT Employees	8	10	1	0
Total Employees	10	13	2	7

Other Subs: **KUO**

Kootenai Paving	Libby, MT
J&M Construction	Libby, MT
Robinson Trucking	Kalispell, MT
Juntunen Trucking	Kalispell, MT
Argus Services	Missoula, MT
Northern Lights	
Security	Kalispell, MT

August 29, 2002